

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04153 011435Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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R 011321Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3756  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
USCINCEUR  
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4153

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SOPN, MOPS, SY, LE  
SUBJECT: PRES. ASSAD ON WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN TROOPS

1. JULY 1 SYRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTED INTERVIEW GRANTED BY PRES. AL-ASSAD TO LEBANESE DAILY AL-ANWAR. AL-BAATH BANNERED ITS MAIN POINTS: "PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD GIVES A FRANK TALK TO AL-ANWAR. 'WE MOVED IN LEBANON WITH CONFIDENCE OF SUCCESS, IN SPITE OF WARNINGS. TODAY, WE ARE IN NEED OF EVERY SOLDIER TO PERFORM HIS DUTY AT THE FRONT. EVERYTHING ISSUING FROM BEGIN AND HIS MILITARY CLIQUE INDICATES THAT WAR IS THEIR OBJECTIVE. THE ARABS MUST FACE UP TO THE NEW PERIL WITH A UNIFIED FRONT.'"

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2. IN TEXT OF INTERVIEW, AL-ASSAD TOLD SAID FREYHA, OWNER OF SAYYAD PUBLISHING HOUSE, THAT ISRAELI LEADERS BELIEVE ISRAEL'S PROBLEMS CANNOT BE SOLVED PEACEFULLY NOR THROUGH SECURE BORDER, BUT "BY LAUNCHING BLITZKRIEG" THAT WILL LEAD TO ESTABLISHMENT OF GREATER ISRAEL. HE APPEALED FOR ARABS TO RESPOND TO THIS THREAT BY AVOIDING MISUNDER-

STANDINGS AND CONFRONTING ISRAEL WITH "UNITED FRONT."

3. RELATING HIS UNDERSTANDING OF ISRAELI AIMS TO SITUATION IN LEBANON, HE NOTED THAT IT WAS NOT IN SYRIA'S INTEREST TO MAINTAIN ITS FORCES IN LEBANON FOR A LENGTHY PERIOD, BECAUSE "WE NEED EVERY SOLDIER TO CARRY OUT HIS DUTY ON THE FRONT, TO TRAIN AND PREPARE FOR THE FIGHTING." HE ALSO REAFFIRMED HIS WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW SYRIAN CONTINGENT OF ADF FROM LEBANON WHENEVER ASKED BY PRES. SARKIS. HE REQUESTED UNDERSTANDING FROM LEBANESE REGARDING INEVITABLE DIFFICULTIES WHICH HAVE ARISEN WITH STATIONING OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN LEBANON, ASSERTED SYRIAN FORCES HAD INTERVENED IN "SPIRIT OF FRATERNITY AND OBLIGATION," AND ASKED FOR LEBANESE TO RESPOND TO OCCASIONAL EXCESSES WITH SIMILAR SPIRIT RATHER THAN HOSTILITY AND PROVOCATION.

4. AL-ASSAD CLAIMED THAT NOT EVEN SYRIA'S FRIENDS HAD SUPPORTED THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION WHEN IT BAGEN, AND ADDED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED "WARNINGS FROM THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION THAT ISRAEL WOULD MOVE AGAINST US IF WE TAKE ACTION TO STOP THE CONSPIRACY IN LEBANON." IN SPITE OF THIS LACK OF SUPPORT, PRESIDENT NOTED THAT SYRIA HAD MOVED WITH CONFIDENCE AND "IN FACT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED" IN LEBANON.

5. ASKED ABOUT STINGINESS OF ARAB PETROLEUM-PRODUCING  
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STATES TOWARD SYRIA, AL-ASSAD DECLINED TO ANSWER DIRECTLY BUT DECLARED THAT HE PREFERRED ARAB SOLIDARITY AT THIS STAGE RATHER THAN MATERIAL SUPPORT IF LATTER PROVED DIFFICULT.

6. COMMENT: WHILE AL-ASSAD HAS ON MANY PAST OCCASIONS STATED SYRIAN WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW UPON REQUEST OF PRES. SARKIS, THIS IS FIRST TIME HE HAS LINKED ISSUE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON WITH PERCEIVED DANGER OF ISRAELI ATTACK AND NEED TO REINFORCE SYRIAN MILITARY FRONT. IT MAY BE THAT THIS IS NO MORE THAN ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO ALLAY FEARS AND ACCUSIONS THAT SARG INTENDS PERMANENT MILITARY OCCUPATION OF LEBANON. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS POSSIBLE AL-ASSAD MAY HAVE CHOSEN INTERVIEW WITH PROMINENT LEBANESE JOURNALIST AS FORUM TO BEING PREPARING PARTIES FOR EVENTUAL SYRIAN MILITARY EVACUATION IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN ITS OWN FRONT AGAINST POSSIBLE ATTACK BY WHAT SYRIA SEES AS MORE BELLIGERENT ISRAELI REGIME.  
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## Message Attributes

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